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Professional Development for Teachers
Presenters: Melinda Williams and Susan Cambique-Tracy

FOCUS: Strategies, exploration and tasks leading up to the creation of a dance composition.

THEME: Westward Movement, Pioneer Life and Work

MATERIALS:

Music by Aaron Copland ("Billy the Kid")
Drum and beater
Chart and Markers

TV monitor and VCR
CD and cassette player

INTRODUCTION:

- Who we are
- Expected outcomes of the workshop
- Four Wheel Learning Cycle – a structural and processing tool
Assessing Prior Knowledge, Getting Smarter, Becoming an Expert, Making Connections

ANTICIPATORY SET: "Setting the Stage"

- Introduce Westward Movement theme and *assess prior knowledge*
- **Problem:** leaving home, making choices, venturing into the unknown, risk taking, interdependence, cooperation, team work, fulfilling a dream
- **What would you bring with you?** Book, practical item, personal item
- Read excerpts from a pioneer woman's diary
- Compare and contrast contemporary and historical choices and values

PREPARING THE BODY FOR MOVEMENT: build and reinforce vocabulary

- Find personal space (home base).
- Introduce **locomotor** and **axial** movement and develop a sequence that leads to a duet.
- Divide students into 1's and 2's.
- Use the following locomotor movements: walk, skip, run, gallop and slides, adding changes of direction, turns and changes of level. Do specific movements for 12 counts each, returning to a home base.
- Add ending onto the movement sequences of 12 counts: spin and reach, jump-jump, spin and reach, loose, twisting movement, jump-jump, spin and reach.
- All explore axial movement (stretch, turn, twist, bend, curve, isolated body parts, etc.) for 12 counts.
- Combine into partners: #1's do 12 counts of locomotor combinations while #2's do 12 counts of axial movement; switch roles; end in a partner design using 4 counts and hold for 4 counts (one partner high level and one partner low level).
- Organize into two groups, each moving on a diagonal line (X pattern) across the floor to work on movement patterns and phrases.
First combination: 16 count phrase
4 cts. – skipping
2 cts. – galloping with right foot and
2 cts. – galloping with left foot
4 cts. – jumps in place (turning)
4 cts. – 2 strong opposite shapes, 2 cts each

CHARACTERS AND OBJECTS FROM PIONEER TIMES

- Shapes of objects – done in groups: wagon wheels, covered wagons, butter churns, fences
- Explore characters of men and women from pioneer times: miners, mothers, sheriff, builders, townspeople, shopkeepers, blacksmiths, dance hall entertainers, Indians, stage coach drivers, farmers, horsemen
- Take a character and three shapes to portray that character – purpose, role and style.
(**criteria:** different levels, facial expressions and body gestures, facings)
- Combined into group, collectively show individual shapes, but in relationship to a small group. Arrange so they work better. Create three tableaux and use 8 cts of movement to change from one “snapshot” scene to the next.

EVERYDAY ACTIONS TRANSFORMED (work movements)

- Explore movements of work and explore how to vary and abstract with elements of dance: kneading bread, chopping, reining in horses, hammering, washing clothes, using a whip, stirring pots, hauling plowing, lifting/carrying, sewing, churning butter sawing, hammering.
- Change the size, change the tempo, change the directions, repeat a part of it, change the energy, make your idea travel, give your idea a rhythmic pattern.
- Create an individual dance phrase/motif.
- Teach your individual phrase to a partner and combine the two phrases.
- Design a locomotor pattern and a pathway to travel to a new place and repeat both phrases.
- Find a way to notate or record your partner combination for future reference.

LEARN THE OPENING MARCH

- Pulling in the reins, pushing back the frontier, chopping wood, wagon wheels getting stuck on a rock, whipping the horses, scouting/searching. Principles of **variety, unity, repetition, and contrast** are used.
- Perform the “Opening March” phrase in groups across the floor (like waves of pioneers traveling across the plains).

COMPOSE A DANCE

- **Dance Task:** In groups of four, pull from all of the ideas you have explored and create a dance capturing the spirit of the Westward Movement. Include and develop motifs that feature the characters and work actions. Include both axial and locomotor movement. Be cognizant of the principles of choreography: **variety, unity, repetition, contrast, and smooth transitions**. Use the elements of dance (space, time, force/energy) to shape your dance and transform everyday movements into artistic expression.

PERFORM FOR ONE ANOTHER AND CRITIQUE THE WORK

- Each group performs their dance. Group assessment and comments follow viewing.

REFLECT AND REVISE ONE PART OF YOUR GROUP DANCE

- Focus on one part of your group dance to revise or extend.

GROUP PERFORMANCE OPTION

- Each group performs the “Opening March.” (Enter one group after the other in successive “waves” of pioneers moving Westward.) Then transition into each group’s dance.

CONNECTIONS AND WRAP-UP

- How could you use some of these ideas or strategies in your classroom?
- How can this fit into your curriculum?
- What do you need in order to be able to use these resources?
- Describe ways that you can incorporate the use of technology in the teaching/learning environment?
- Are you aware of the Utah Standards in the Arts?
- Can this help you incorporate and address them in your classroom?

THOUGHTS OF A PIONEER WOMAN

April 12

It is late - the rest of the family is asleep. I'm too excited to sleep - excited and a little frightened at the same time - early Monday morning we join the other families in the wagon train to start west to Oregon.

April 14

There's not much room in our wagon. It's only ten feet by four feet. I had to leave some things behind with the Allens - my grandmother's rocker, Father's desk, dishes, and most of our books. There is little room for the most-needed items - cooking utensils, tools, blanket, and provisions. I could not leave my dulcimer. Albert made room for it in one of the inside storage boxes that we sleep on at night.

April 15

We had to wait until the grass was high enough for the animals before we could start our journey. The longer we waited the less sure I was that we were doing the right thing.

April 16

The wagons are ready to start - the children are so excited - I'm afraid they will get hurt. Some of the men have never driven wagons before and do not know how to handle the animals.

April 22

The wagon master said we could rest today - Sunday. This may be the only Sunday rest for a long while - we have so far to go. We had to wash clothes, make repairs on some of the wagons and cook. Everyone has a job - the children have their chores - gathering firewood or carrying water.

May 1

There are all kinds of people on this train - farmers, miners, a preacher - we're lucky to have a doctor - people from faraway countries - some are happy to be going to a new place - some are happy to be leaving an old place - making this journey together as a family. Most are just good folks - one man is dissatisfied with everything.

May 15

We stopped at Fort Kearney. The oxen needed shoes - we made repairs on the harness and stocked up on provisions. Several families are turning back - they feel it will be too hard a trip and too dangerous - but we decided to go on.

May 16

When we get to Oregon we get two sections of land and will have a place to raise the children. One man, an overseer from North Carolina, wants to live in a place where everyone will be free.

May 23

Cholera - so many people sick. The doctor did not get much rest. His supply of medicine is low. Eight people died. There was no wood for coffins. The men had to bury them by the trail and pile rocks on the graves so the wolves cannot get to them.